Antebellum America: Second Great Awakening & Transcendentalists

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1. The Second Great Awakening

"Spiritual Reform From Within"
[Religious Revivalism]

Social Reforms & Redefining the
Ideal of Equality

- Temperance
- Asylum & Penal Reform
- Abolitionism
- Education
- Women’s Rights
“In France, I had almost always seen the spirit of religion and the spirit of freedom pursuing courses diametrically opposed to each other; but in America, I found that they were intimately united, and that they reigned in common over the same country... Religion was the foremost of the political institutions of the United States.” — Alexis de Tocqueville
“The Pursuit of Perfection”
In Antebellum America
“The Benevolent Empire”: 1825 – 1846
The “Burned-Over” District in Upstate New York

The map illustrates the distribution of various religious groups and events in the "Burned-Over" District of Upstate New York. Key locations and symbols include:

- Mormons (blue circles)
- Millerites (purple circles)
- Fourierists (black circles)
- Antislavery churches (red circles)
- 1831 revivals (green circles)

The map highlights the concentration of religious activities in this region during the late 19th century.
The ranges of tents, the fires, reflecting light...; the candles and lamps illuminating the encampment; hundreds moving to and fro...; the preaching, praying, singing, and shouting,... like the sound of many waters, was enough to swallow up all the powers of contemplation.

“soul-shaking” conversion
The Mormons
(The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints)

Joseph Smith
(1805-1844)

- 1823 → Golden Tablets
- 1830 → Book of Mormon
- 1844 → Murdered in Carthage, IL
The Mormon “Trek”
The Mormons
(The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints)

- Deseret community.
- Salt Lake City, Utah

Brigham Young
(1801-1877)
If you will take up your crosses against the works of generations, and follow Christ in the regeneration, God will cleanse you from all unrighteousness.

Remember the cries of those who are in need and trouble, that when you are in trouble, God may hear your cries.

If you improve in one talent, God will give you more.
Shaker Meeting
'Tis the gift to be simple, 'Tis the gift to be free, 
'Tis the gift to come down where you ought to be, 
And when we find ourselves in the place just right, 
'Twill be in the valley of love and delight. 

When true simplicity is gained 
To bow and to bend we shan't be ashamed, 
To turn, turn will be our delight, 
'Till by turning, turning we come round right.
Shaker Simplicity & Utility
2. Transcendentalism
(European Romanticism)

- Liberation from understanding and the cultivation of reasoning.
- "Transcend" the limits of intellect and allow the emotions, the SOUL, to create an original relationship with the Universe.
Transcendentalist Thinking

- Man must acknowledge a body of moral truths that were intuitive and must TRANSCEND more sensational proof:
  1. The infinite benevolence of God.
  2. The infinite benevolence of nature.
  3. The divinity of man.

- They instinctively rejected all secular authority and the authority of organized churches and the Scriptures, of law, or of conventions.
Transcendentalism
(European Romanticism)

- Therefore, if man was divine, it would be wicked that he should be held in slavery, or his soul corrupted by superstition, or his mind clouded by ignorance!!

- Thus, the role of the reformer was to restore man to that divinity with which God had endowed him.
Transcendentalist Intellectuals/Writers
Concord, MA

Ralph Waldo Emerson
- Nature (1832)
- "The American Scholar" (1837)
- Self-Reliance (1841)

Henry David Thoreau
- Walden (1854)
- Resistance thru Civil Disobedience (1849)

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The Transcendentalist Agenda

- Give freedom to the slave.
- Give well-being to the poor and the miserable.
- Give learning to the ignorant.
- Give health to the sick.
- Give peace and justice to society.
Their pursuit of the ideal led to a distorted view of human nature and possibilities:

* The Blithedale Romance

One should accept the world as an imperfect place:

* Scarlet Letter
* House of the Seven Gables